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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002849

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/07/2025

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TWO SUNNI LEADERS SHARE SUNNI INITIATIVES AND CONCERNS WITH CODEL LEVIN

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford.
Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Deputy Prime Minister Abid Mutlak al-Jaburi and Deputy Constitution Committee Chairman Adnan al-Janabi, both Sunni Arabs, offered Senator Carl Levin a wide range of initiatives to reach out to their community in a July 5 dinner meeting. Both Jaburi and Janabi supported holding to the TAL timeline for constitution drafting and elections. They called for a halt to what they called indiscriminate and aggressive military operations targeting Sunni areas, and they complained that the Iraqi security services were poorly led and inadequately trained. They also sought the release of high-profile detainees and an improved process to disseminate information about detainees. Jaburi warned that the Jafari government risks further alienating the Sunni population with a plan to confiscate the assets of former Ba'athists and regime officials. (However, one leading Iraqi government official has since told us there is no such plan under consideration.) Both Jaburi and Janabi expected strong Sunni Arab participation in the next elections but said the IECI needs to be replaced because it is politicized. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Codel Levin explored possibilities for improved Sunni Arab outreach in a dinner July 5 with Deputy Prime Minister Abid Mutlak al-Jaburi and Deputy Constitution Committee Chairman Adnan al-Janabi. Both Jaburi and Janabi supported sticking with the TAL deadlines on constitution drafting, the referendum, and the next elections. Janabi said that following the induction of Sunni Arabs into the constitution drafting committee, he was optimistic that the document could be completed on time. But Jaburi lamented that Sunni extremists, Shia extremists, and leaders in "neighboring states" were all working to keeping the Sunni Arab population marginalized from the political process. He warned, "Our non-participation will halt the whole American plan here - our children and the Americans will still be fighting instead of living in freedom and democracy."

LISTING THE INITIATIVES

3. (C) The following set of initiatives was proposed over dinner with the Charge and the Iraqi leaders. Jaburi elaborated on some of them in a letter he wrote to Senator Levin and the Charge, excerpts of which have been translated below. The central goal of all of these plans, both men said repeatedly, was to end the "humiliation" of the Sunni community so it can reclaim a place of honor in the political process.

-- HALT AGGRESSIVE "ANTI-SUNNI" OPERATIONS: Both Jaburi and Janabi were convinced that arrest campaigns and military operations were being deliberately targeted at the Sunni community. When Senator Levin pointed out that this was natural since the Sunni community was the center of the insurgency, neither man was assuaged. The names of the operations are themselves provocative, Jaburi said, referring to Operations "Lightning" and "Spear." Jaburi said, "Every day hundreds are killed or hurt in these attacks." Particularly offensive are raids on mosques and the detention of women, he said. In sum, he said, he was asking for "more mercy" and more thought about excessive use of force. Janabi said that he successfully coordinated North Babil operations while serving as Minister of State in the Allawi government. The lesson of the experience was that random military searches only provoked the population while targeted operations was much more effective at winning local trust.

-- RELEASE PROMINENT DETAINEES, IMPROVE INFORMATION FLOW: Jaburi said that the Iraqi government and MNF-I should build confidence with the Sunni Arab community by releasing detained clerics, former senior officers, and local notables. "Even if they've made small

mistakes, close your eyes a little bit," Jaburi said. Jaburi's letter calls for the release of those who did not commit a "witnessed crime." Janabi said the process of informing Iraqis about detained relatives was improved, but he complained that Iraqis still have too much trouble finding out the nature of the charges against them. (NOTE: MNF-I currently has under detention thirty-eight Sunni clerics, nineteen rated high or extreme threat, ten as medium threat, and nine still in initial interview. A number of former senior Ba'ath officials categorized as "High-Value Detainees" have been approved by MNF-I for release, but these releases have been awaiting ITG approval for months, and several of these HVDs are now under consideration for trial by the Iraqi Special Tribunal. END NOTE)

-- IMPROVE PROFESSIONALISM IN THE IRAQI FORCES:

Jaburi said that politicized and under-qualified personnel plague the Iraqi security services. Too many former criminals and low-ranking officers have been unduly promoted to senior rank. "Some men who never attended a military academy are colonels," he said. "There are thieves who are captains." Jaburi alleged in his letter that many soldiers are stealing property during raids and demanding ransom in exchange for the release of detainees. Militias, he argued, must be dissolved and assurances must be made that soldiers are serving the nation, not their sect.

-- BE MORE REALISTIC ON IRAQI MILITARY TRAINING:

Jaburi, a former Iraqi army officer himself, called for more intensive and realistic approach to the training of the Iraqi military. Figures on Iraqi force strength are exaggerated because large numbers of soldiers are absentees, he claimed. Speaking as a former division commander, Jaburi said that Iraq does not really have 10 divisions despite announcements to that effect. Each group falls short of 1,000 soldiers even though the government is allocating funding for that amount and seeing it disappear. Jaburi pointed out that Iraq's monarchy held the country under its control with a force of only 15,000 soldiers. The 1958 coup was carried out with only one division, and the Ba'athist coup in 1968 was pulled off with less than a hundred leading Ba'athists in charge and an extremely small number of troops. If the government really controlled some 170,000 soldiers -- the current statistic -- then all would be well, he said.

-- FIND MORE OBJECTIVE ELECTION OVERSIGHT: Both Jaburi and Janabi were convinced that the IECI was a partisan body in the service of Kurdish and Shia interests. They want it replaced altogether in time for the next elections. Jaburi's letter recommends having the "Iraqi judiciary" oversee the elections rather than the IECI. The letter also suggests having an "international neutral party provide oversight in the presence of an American official," mentioning as examples the UN and the Arab League. (Note: The TAL states that IECI has sole authority for elections throughout Iraq during the transitional period. Also, there already exists a non-voting UN Commissioner seat in the IECI Board of Commissioners. End Note.)

-- ELECTIONS BY DISTRICTS: Both men supported holding future elections with slots allotted to each district. This step would ensure representation for each province, unlike the previous system, they said.

(Comment: We understand most members of the constitution drafting committee are leaning in this direction. End Comment)

-- INITIATE MORE MEETINGS: Jaburi's letter calls for Iraqi and U.S. officials to increase the tempo and scope of their outreach meetings with notables and shaykhs and former officers to encourage participation in the political process and hear complaints.

-- HALT THE "NEW GOVERNMENT CONFISCATION CAMPAIGN":

Jaburi claimed that the Iraqi Council of Ministers had passed or would soon pass a policy to confiscate the assets of all Ba'ath Party "Division Members" and all former regime officials who held the rank of Director General or higher. Jaburi claimed that the policy would stretch back to assets acquired since 1979 and would bankrupt a wide swath of Sunni Arabs. The government planned to carry out the policy through the creation of a special court, he said. Jaburi said only he and Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi had opposed the plan. In his letter, Jaburi warned, "This decision will be more disastrous and dangerous than the dissolution of the army and the de-Ba'athification campaign." (Comment: Jaburi appears to be entirely mistaken here, but his fears reflect the widespread sense of persecution that De-Ba'athification policies have created, even amongst those who have nothing to fear from the process. Da'wa Party leader and Jafari

colleague Nuri Kamil told Poloff on July 6 that no such confiscation policy has been presented or contemplated. Kamil said the only possible grain of truth in this allegation was that Ba'athists had stolen Iraqi assets and the Iraqi government, by law, has always reserved the right to reclaim assets stolen from the Iraqi people. And, of course, De-Ba'athification law does single out Division Level Ba'athists and Directors General as the lowest rung of "senior" members of the former regime. Kamil emphasized that in practice the government has never made a single confiscation. "It is just ink on paper," he said. End Comment)

COMMENT: Buttressing the IECI
For the Battle Ahead

14. (C) The doubts both men expressed over the IECI are real cause for concern. While we will work diligently to keep them on board, there is a real danger that some Sunni Arab leaders -- perhaps even members of the committee -- could campaign to vote down the constitution in the referendum. The Sunni Arabs likely to lead such an effort will undoubtedly be among those who are convinced that the Sunni Arabs hold a majority in this country and an overwhelming majority in several provinces. They are likely to fail in the referendum because, despite these dreams, Sunni Arabs lack two-thirds of the votes in three provinces. When they do fail, these Sunni Arab leaders will face a choice: accept the legitimacy of the referendum and the concurrent fact that Sunnis are not even close to a majority in Iraq, or reject the legitimacy of the IECI and cling to the illusion that they are Iraq's majority. They are depressingly likely to make the latter choice, which means the IECI will already be under fire from some leaders in the Sunni Arab community at precisely the moment when we are gearing up to encourage wide Sunni Arab participation in the next elections.

15. (C) It will, therefore, be important to boost the credibility of the IECI among the Sunni community. Doing that will require more contact between the IECI and Sunni Arab organizations, political and non-political, and a solid demonstration by the IECI that it is sensitive to the election-related needs of the Sunni Arab community. In contrast to other parts of Iraq, a higher-profile role by the UN and other international observers would be helpful in Iraqi Sunni Arab areas. If some of those observers are credible representatives from other Sunni Arab states, this would further ease Iraqi Sunni Arab suspicions.

16. (C) List of participants:

Deputy Prime Minister Abid Mutlak al-Jaburi
Deputy Constitution Committee Chairman Adnan al-Janabi
Senator Carl Levin (D-MI)
Mr. Richard DeBobes, Minority Staff Director
Mr. Daniel Cox, Professional Staff Member
Major John Ulrich, US Army Liaison
Charge D'Affaires David Satterfield
Political Counselor Robert Ford
Political Officer Jeff Beals
Legislative Liaison Robert Kelley

17. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

Satterfield